

HOUGH FAMILY LETTERS
1876

S. Hough was at Hough Springs in Lake County at the beginning of the year, and he wrote to his family in Lafayette that it was a severe winter. Lots of rain and snow covered the mountains; roads were impassable and the creeks too high to cross much of the time. It would sometimes take months for a letter to arrive. Newspapers were the Call and the Post and these were their source of information on land matters.

On May 30, young George wrote that it took him four days to make the trip from Lafayette to Hough Springs. The first day, he got as far as Vacaville; the second day, he got to 16 miles from College City; the third day, as far as Eppersons. "I did not lose the road once coming up," he wrote.

On the Fourth of July, there were fireworks and Roman candles in Lafayette. Frank wrote to his brother George that, "We fired off our fireworks and we did not get hurt or burnt. They shot the anvil off 48 times and they used three cans of powder."

On August 7, George reported that there were two stages running daily through Hough Springs. He was going home to Lafayette the following week.

HOUGH FAMILY LETTERS TYPED FROM THE ORIGINAL LETTERS
BY MRS. HELEN SHANK

Hough Springs

My Dear Son

Jan 15th 76

I received your letter of the 7th if Adams wants to buy the Ranch sell it to him if you can for \$10,000.00 if you can or less Better sell it for less than it is worth than high all the time if you can sell it subget to the Leas laws and n all ten or eigh thousand dollars is better than law git an offer out of him if you can if you can not sell git reddy to fight do all you can to git evry thing in shape git a time set for tryat

we hay got the grane inn have got no Lumber yet the roads were Bad and can not git no one to drive the team that I would trust

I wish you would git things in Shape as Sone you can and git Som Lumber down I was up to the mill this week we can git plenty of Lumber now

I have not mutch to write as the wtiny for the Letter I will write the next male

Yours S Hough

Hough's Springs, March 1st, (1876

Dear George, I received a letter from you a few weeks ago, and we were glad to hear from you and that you were well. Your grandpa has written a letter today to your father, in answer to one he received yesterday from him, dated January 20th. We are having a very hard winter here. It rains or snows half of the time, it is raining now. The mountains on every side of us is covered with snow; it looks gloomy enough. I hope I shall not see many such winters as this has been. I would not mind the weather so much if we were not shut in so we cannot get out. The roads are impassable, the water in the creeks most of the time, is so high they can not be crossed. Sometimes horses go in all over. One man came along and his horse was wet clear over his head and back. The man said: he thought his horse would drown before he could get him across"--that was between here and Mr Allens. A few weeks ago a man from Colusa, was on his way to Bartlett's on foot and came up the creek on the other side, or rather, he crossed the mountain and came out at the creek between here and Mr Morgan's; he did not know where he was, or how far he was from a house but thought he must not be far from our place, so he fired off his gun two or three times in quick succession and hallooed with all his might, but getting no answer, he thought rather than stay there all night, he would try and wade the creek, so he took off all his clothes, boots and all, done them in a bundle, put them on his head and waded across the creek; the water being nearly to his waist.

He came here and staid over night. It was some time after dark when he got here. He went to B's on business, was gone three or four days, came back and stayed here another night. When he came first he said "he thought if he had to stay out all night he would keep his clothes dry by taking them off," --he had no matches to light a fire with, and the weather was cold. An other man came here after dark one night; he started to come from somewhere over the mountains, intending to come out at Mr Stanton's but got lost (it being dark) came through by the Spanish ranch and down through our flat on the other side of the creek. The dogs made a great nois, I went to the door twice. I told grandpa I thought I heard a whistle, like one whistling through their hands, in a little time a man came to the house--he had a horse--he said he whistled two or three times through his hands--he at last saw the light in the house. Mr Stanton has killed over 20 deer this winter. Willie S was here yesterday. He brought his aunt, they spent the afternoon here--they went home in the rain, but they had a covered bugy. Mr S. has lost a good many sheep--He put out poison and killed a Cal. lion which measured seven feet. Watch got a dose too, but I gave him a pound or two of butter, and he was all right. He went there in the night I supose, for he would look in the morning as if he had eaten a whole sheep. He has been shot too, with shot in his legs, but I don't think he was shot at. Mr S.s Willie said he did not know of his being there. Grandpa gave me a heifer calf and I am feeding it; it is a

nice one,--it is two months old. I am also raising a little (as Will called Frank's calf) ox calf. Mr Ashfield, the other day, brought us two quarters of venison. I made a nice pie of some of it. Why is it we never get the Gazette--we have not got one in over two months

Tell your father that uncle M. Dart is dead; also, Jimie and Johny Amsdell O. Hough and J.W. B. and family were all well when they wrote.

Ashfield and co. have dissolved. Walker has walked off and gone to chopping wood for Mr Ardray. He failed in getting help to make the road, so that has fell through, as far as W. is concerned. Ashfield is on the Spanish ranch; the rest, (Smith and Walker) have ceceded. Their bills here was about forty dollars, when they left, they paid all but nineteen and a half which Mr S owed, he said he had not the money, but woud get it in a few days; he came and paid it. We have not taken in a dime since only, I got three dollars for washing I earned seven bits last week, washing Tell Frank I got his letter yesterday and was glad to hear from him. I am sorry I could not write to him by the to-morrows mail, but will try to by the next. The mail comes only once a week and sometimes, only once in two weeks. There is a letter here for Sim, that was mailed last Dec. P. Myres got one yesterday, from Oakland, mailed in Nov. Tell Will and Carrie I will write to them too before long. I thank you for the fish line, it is nice. I do not think there is a fish in the creek. I saw three nice ducks in the creek one day, Ashfield says he

could kill lots of deer if he had a gun. The man without a nose went up to the Spanish ranch on a hunt and killed four deer, week before last. That is where Ashfield got his venison. G Bartlett went to snow mountain on a bear hunt and was thrown from his horse and was hurt quite badly, he is all right now. 'Good night.

Write soon. Grandma

I don't expect you can read the half of this. Grandpa and me would like to see you very much. Grandpa's leg is very bad yet I tried to get some nitrate of silver, but could get none.

I keep Watch tied up nights, since he got poisoned. Low sprawls about as much as ever He follows me wherever I go My finger is nearly well, the nail is not quite off yet, and it is very tender You need not send any flower peas. I have some Did you get the chickens. You asked if you could have the others You may have them if you can get them without making to much trouble for the man on the ranch in catching them

Houghs Springs

March 7th--76

My Dear Son

We have some verry bad luck Two of our Horses have got drowned in the creek. Beacham and Roks and come verry nere looseing Dick, but have saved him all righe. It hapend in this way. We had Beacham Kit Tom & the colt on the other side of the creek for the ten Day and kept Dick & Rook in the Barn over night turning them out in the morning to feed on grass the creek has binn uway high the last week but had gone down Saterdag so the cows could cross the horses went over the hill in the morning wehn Fanes went to git them at night found Dick in the center of creek near an Island in about four feet of warter belu the crossing could not git out ether side of the creek. cane to hous got a rope and crost the rapedest part of the creek on a log and got in the warter about west deep floated down caut a willow and got in the island waded to the horse got him on the island fastend him to a tree and left him ther all night. Allen came down the next morning we got a rope over the creek fastend to the horse and to tree on the oposite side of the creek forst im on to warter Swang ove to the Bank walked up to the crossing fot him to the Barn all right and we him thare. found Beacham & Rooks two or three hundred feet below drowned

The cows crosst the same plase all right. we have had a Terrible wintter up here the water was the highest to day

that it has bin this winter

You will have to git apair of work horses gawn thare and bring them up with you I would not git verry high priced wanes but good to pull you know what we want if you can not trade othe horse for them you will have to buy them for cash or credit for have them we must befour we can do any thing The roads will not be passable befour the firs of April you had better git the money for the rent of the Ranch befour you come up

I sent you a letter Sund morning. I dont no when this will git this off, the grane is looking verry well

Yours S Hough

Hough Springs

March 16th/76

My Dear Son

I recieved the Post of the 15th of Last month in regard to Land matters I think we had Better imploy Howard if he can git the amount of Land we want in good fath in the So-branta but if he can not git but 160 acres we dont want to go to any exspence we can git that any way. you had beter see him and find out what he wants to do, or what he wants us to do. we are willing help him all we can if he can git our land Setted if he wants a fee we are willing to pay it if gits any land for us not otherways do as you think best about the matter.

The wether has bin rater rough slong back but is more mild now. they will have the road open by the first of April or as soon as we are reddy to use it.

I hope you will come up as quick as you posibly can for we can not do any thing untill you come up with some horses Dick is in good trim Cit I have not seene in the last month She is on the other side of the creek Ianes say she is looking well.

The Subscription to the Call runs out the first April you had better renue it or take the Post it will keep us Posted in Land matters than the Call

Thare is not mutch nuse up here Bartlett had a little trub-ble with Brown & Lang. They commenst to move off the cabbins

and other building they put on the place. Bartlett paid
them \$1000.00 to Stop

Yours S Hough

Hough Springs May 30.

Dear Mama

I got here all right today, after 4 days travel. I stoped over that day it rained. The first day I got to Vacaville, 2nd sixteen miles from Colege city, 3rd to Eppereous. I did not loose the road once coming up.

I come to Winters and through Hungry Holler. every thing is all right up here. Mr. King is cutting the grain. He will get done tomorrow if the Reaper does not break. I fed the Horses Hay every night it did not cost only \$75 c all together. Grandma did not know me when I come Here, she asked me who I was. Peter did not know me neither. I can not write much this time for I do not feel very well. Tell papa Ed. Sawtell has come back and is stopping at eppersons now. Green Epperson's girl is very sick she is stopping to her Uncles. I could write a good deal more but I want to send this by the stage in the morning as you are anxious to hear from me.

Yours truly,

George.

Lafayette July 9/'76

Dear George

We received your letter,--was very glad to hear from you, that you arrived at the Springs safe and well.

This letter leaves us all well. Willie was a little sick after you left, but he is all right now.

Carrie says she is lonesome without George here, and will send you her last Home. I wish you would lay it away safely, after you read it, so she can get it again, and I'll put all pf the papers together, and make her a little book.

There is but little news since you left, worth mentioning.

Shreve has had his unthrashed grain drawed, and piled up in one long big stack in front of his house, not far from our old house. I have not sold any of my chickens yet. I am going to send to Oakland by Shuey this week and get some feed for them, and feed them awhile, so they will be fit for market.

It was very quiet here the Fourth Our boys were about the only ones that had any fireworks. Frank and Willie were up about five o'clock the morning of the fourth of July, and commenced fireing off their firecrackers they seemed to enjoy it much, all by themselves. The boys come down from Mr Stanages, but they were too late, for the firecrackers. They come down again at night to see the boys fire off their Roman Candles etc. No one got hurt or burnt in the least,--the day passed off very pleasantly.

Allice Clark left Isaacs, or Laforest was here last week and said Allice had run away. She got up in the morning and part-

ly got the breakfast, and then disappeared took a valise with her, and went no one knew where or how. Isaac left his work to look for her. I heard that he found her to her sisters. (Mrs. A. Bosses) not far from Martinez. I do not know the real cause of her leaving. Laforest told several things, that he thought made her go away.

I have not seen Mrs. Isaac in some time. I heard that she had been quite sick. Mrs. Boardman is sick. The hot weather made a great many about here sick.

You forgot to take some of the apples with you, they are going off very fast, they will all be gone before you come back. The Bartlett Pears will be nice they will be ripe some next month. Please write as often as you can.

Yours aff. Mama

Lafayette. July. 9.th 1876

Dear Brother George

I thought I would try and write a few lines to you. we are all well at the present. David Stanage and I went after squirrels last tuesday and we both to gether caught 9 squirrels and willie and robert Mcneil went after squirrels but did not catch any any. willie and tolbert Vallier was over here this morning, when we fired our fire works we did not get hurt or burnt. that wooden pistole that I had never broke and I fired very near all the fire crackers in it, they shot the anvil off about 48 times they used 3 cans of powder. they say that Jennie Allen is very sick. Jack Stull said that Mr Maden was some better. the land lords wife is very sick with the fever. there is not very much news at the present, I went over to Mr Valliers yesterday. are you very lonesome up there, Carries cat caught a squirrel yesterday and one today.

good by

Frank Hough

Carrie says she will send you her last paper mama little chickens are in the house all the time

Houghs Springs July 15 1876

Dear mama

I thought I would write you a few lines in answer to yours. I was very glad to hear from you. We are all well. there is a family camping here. they came here last night. papa has been out hunting good many times but only killed one deer. I was glad carrie sent me her paper. I sent a couple of calls but I dont know whether you care any thing for them or not. I went to the saw mill with papa the other day after a load of lumber. the men (myres and jones) are building a cabin today. papa has just now started out hunting. the barn is finished, grandpa was sick last night.

We have got a china boy but you have to take magnafing glass to see him. he is only eleven years old there is not much news up here. they have made an addition to the house there are two more rooms, two stages run here all the time, there was a man run off the grade of epersons and broke the wagon in pieces but did not get hurt himself. there was a man was found dead in road beyond Allens Springs. who was stopping to Bartletts. Mrs Eperson has been stopping here. I went down to Stantons the other day with papa. the cat has got some kittens but they are under the hay in the barn. I must close by bidding you good night

Please excuse all bad speling and writing

G.H.

Yours Truly

George S Hough

Allens Spr P.O.

Lafayette, July, 23, 1876

Dear George

I have just come home, after going with the boys to get our cow, I saw our calf, for the first time, since she was put in Mr. Browns field. It has grown so much I should have not known it if it had not been for the "ear mark".

I received your letter last wednesday, and was very glad indeed to hear from you. Frank was some disappointed, because you did not write some to him. I wish you would write a little to him next time you write. We are all very well, and getting along nicely.

School commences, one week from tomorrow.

The Steam Thrasher has been here and thrashed all of the grain near here. It took two days and a half, to thrash Mr Shreves grain, they thrashed half of a day for him and he was not satisfied with the amout of grain he got, and got drunk, and remained so, until they finished thrashing. He was a "big fool" to do as he did for he has got a nice lot of grain, the last turned out better than the first, I think.

I sent down to Oakland by Mr. Shuey and got a sack of chicken feed, and he done two other errands for me and did not charge me any thing,--he said next time I sent--he should charge me "two bits".

There has been several sick about here, but they are all better now.

Mr Stanages folks are washing for Thorn's folks. He thought he

could get it done cheaper so he took it from Mrs. Isaac up there. Mrs. Stanage charged him as much as Mrs. I. did. Since I wrote to you last I have got one letter, two papers, & a book of fashions.

In one of the papers was an account of a man who got killed by a tree falling on him, breaking his scul. He went to school where I

Write as often as you can. I will mail two Gazetts when I do this letter. Have you caught any fish since you went up there. What do the cows get to eat? I think it must rather dry up there now. The weather is very cool here now.

E.L.H.

Hough's Springs Aug. 7.

Dear mama

I received your letter the other day and was very glad to hear from you. we are all well up here, and I hope these few lines will find you the same. there is a big fire over on the hill. it burns up the brush, as far as it goes. papa has been ahunting to night but did not get anything. I shot twi sqyurreks tidat,

they have got two cabins very near done I have got abig trap, and I set it to catch akind of an animal that lives up by the Spring.

it was pretty hot up here weeks ago but it is getting cooler now.

I been down to Mr Stantons twice since I have been up here. there is not much of any news now?

there is two stages running daily here. has papa written to you yet.

as it is getting late, and news is getting scarce I begin to close. good night.

N.B. you need not answer this letter for I will be home next week some time.

Your Affectionately,

G. S. H.

Hough Springs, Sept 3rd (1876)

Dear George, not hearing anything from you or any of the rest I thought I would write and try to find out what the reason is. The men are doing nothing for want of lumber. I could of had the cabins filled if there had been stoves in them. One cabin has a family in it. I borrowed an old stove of Mr Stanton. I cannot think why your grandfather does not come home, or write. I supposed they would send up some stoves. I thought you would write if no one wlse did. Last week there was seven hunters here three days, two of them have come back, and some of the others are coming back. Last week they killed five deer. To-day they killed two. I suppose you want to know what the traps have caught, Well, I get Henry to set the steel trap and I take it up near the spring. The first night it was set it caught a fox, once it caught a bird, once a toad. Ri set the little rat trap, and one morning there was a fox caught by the toes, in it--but before he got to it the fox got away, leaving two toes in the trap. Foxes are not as plenty as they were. When that one got into my trap, Lew made a terrible fuss, at first I did not know what was the trouble, after awhile I heard the fox yell as if he was fighting with Lew, so I got up, and asked Ri if he would go up with me, but he did not want to, so I took the lantern, an ax handle and the hatchet and went up and killed him. He had pulled the stake up and started off, but got fast in the bushes. It was the stake you drove down near wher we saw that fox coming along, one time when you were up there.

When I got up to go up there the other night or rather morn
it was half past two. I hope to get two and a half for the
scalp, for I think I earned it. It is not every night that
I would go up there alone, but that time I did not feel afraid.
I cannot write all I would, as it is getting late and my fingers
are tired, so I will bid you good night. Write soon.

(George)

(Grandma

P.S.

If this gets there before they start to come up, I hope they
will get some stoves I would like to know whether they are
going to stay all summer or not. I think they ought to have
written and let us know what they wanted done

I will not scold any more, but wait.

AH

Houghs Springs Dec 4rd/76

My Dear Wife

I am about in fact am fullfilling one one of my resolves of which I spoke to you

Well I got here yesterday (Sunday 3) after three days of tedious riding and one day I lay still the next morning after I left home I was pulling down my overalls when I was taken with a stich in the back which throwed me on my face (that was at Suscol whare we camped once) after a few minutes I could parcialy straighten up and manged to get on my horse and rode that day to Calistoga which place I reached some time after sundown next morning had awful pain in back, hips and breast that morning I had a time getting on the horse that day I rode to Lower Lake and it did seem before reaching the latter place that every joint in my necke back and shoulders was rubbing and grinding against the other so on Saturday I layed up and it was well I did or I should have laid in the hills for although I felt better by far on Sunday than on Saturday I had to lay down several times before I got to the Springs this morning my back feels very well considering my trip but I feel a little sick to the stomach. I found things running about as usual here nothing new one way or the other Mother was much pleased with her dress and she says God will bless you and I know he will too dear

Jones has gone after hay to day I shall go to the lake soon as I am able to ride on the wagon. I am expecting the

stage every minute. I have no news to write anyway, only they have discharged that telegraph operator at I do not think he has a friend in Bartletts Springs he lost his friends and position by keeping that dispatch.

I shall be home before the first of Jan. unless prevented by sickness or storm I did not pay the taxes as I intended preferring to wait until I came down on account of having money enough to get provisions and stuff in here and I can raise money on the horses when I come down Good bye dear may God bless and protect you is the sincere prayer of

Your affectionate

Husband